

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BUDAPE 00044 070755Z

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SAJ-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 /059 W

-----070757Z 100541 /12

R 061409Z JAN 77

FM AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7656

INFO: RUDKRB/AMEMBASSY BELGRADE 1753

AMEMBASSY BERLIN

AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST

AMEMBASSY MOSCOW

AMEMBASSY PRAGUE

AMEMBASSY SOFIA

AMEMBASSY WARSAW

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, HU

SUBJECT: CARDINAL LEKAI CALL ON CHARGE

REF: BUDAPEST 0014 (NOTAL)

1. AS REPORTED PREVIOUS REFTEL, CARDINAL LASZLO LEKAI CALLED ON CHARGE AT EMBASSY JANUARY 4, TO RETURN COURTESY CALL MADE BY CHARGE PRIOR TO THE CARDINAL'S TRIP TO U.S. TO PARTICIPATE IN EUCHARISTIC CONGRESS HELD IN PHILADELPHIA LAST AUGUST.

2. THE FACT THAT THE HEAD OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN HUNGARY SHOULD MAKE A COURTESY CALL ON THE CHARGE AT THE AMERICAN EMBASSY IS UNPRECEDENTED IN ITSELF. IN LIGHT OF PAST RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN THE EMBASSY AND CARDINAL LEKAI'S PREDECESSOR, IT IS EVEN MORE REMARKABLE AND LADEN WITH SYMBOLISM. THE CARDINAL'S CALL WAS AS MUCH A PERSONAL LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 02 BUDAPE 00044 070755Z

ACT ILLUSTRATIVE OF THE TYPE OF MAN HE IS, AS IT WAS, OF COURSE, REFLECTIVE OF HIS DESIRE TO SYMBOLIZE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF NORMALCY WITHIN THE HUNGARIAN CATHOLIC CHURCH, AFTER ITS STORMY HISTORY OF THE PAST 30 YEARS.

3. THE SUBSTANCE OF THE CONVERSATION DURING THE COURTESY CALL WAS LESS SIGNIFICANT THAN THE IMPORTANCE OF THE EVENT

ITSELF. THE CARDINAL GAVE A LENGTHY REPORT ON HIS TRIP TO THE U.S. WHICH HE FOUND EXTREMELY INTERESTING AND ENJOYABLE. HE WAS WELL RECEIVED EVERYWHERE, AND WAS PARTICULARLY PLEASED TO BE ABLE TO MEET WITH NUMEROUS MEMBERS OF HUNGARIAN-AMERICAN ORGANIZATIONS. HE FOUND HIMSELF TO BE THE OBJECT OF MUCH CURIOSITY, A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SUSPICION, AND CONSIDERABLE GOODWILL.

4. THE CARDINAL COMMENTED ON THE HUNGARIAN-AMERICAN COMMUNITY AS BEING MIXED IN CHARACTER, AND INCLUDING A WIDE RANGE OF POLITICAL BELIEFS. HE MENTIONED THAT WHILE HIS TREATMENT BY THE AMERICAN PRESS WAS FRIENDLY, OPEN AND OBJECTIVE, THE EMIGRE PRESS WAS IN SOME CASES VERY HOSTILE TO HIM. HE SAID THAT THE MOST HOSTILE EMIGRES SEEM TO COME FROM AMONG THOSE "NATIONAL SOCIALISTS" WHO LEFT IN THE 1944-45 PERIOD, AND WHO HAVE NOT BEEN BACK TO VISIT HUNGARY. HE ADDED THAT THE HUNGARIAN-LANGUAGE PRESS SEEMED TO BE PREDOMINATELY IN THE HANDS OF "NATIONAL SOCIALIST" ELEMENTS.

5. REPLYING TO A QUESTION ON THE STATUS OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN HUNGARY, CARDINAL LEKAI WAS MORE GUARDED, BUT SAID THAT THE SITUATION IS SLOWLY BUT STEADILY IMPROVING. HE SAID THAT HE REGULARLY CALLS THE ATTENTION OF AUTHORITIES TO PROBLEMS AS THEY OCCUR, AND MOST OF THEM ARE SOLVED AFTER SOME ATTENTION IS DEVOTED TO THEM. THERE ARE STILL MANY PROBLEMS TO BE SOLVED, HOWEVER, HE SAID.

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PAGE 03 BUDAPE 00044 070755Z

6. AFTER HIS COURTESY CALL, CARDINAL LEKAI VISITED WITH GREAT INTEREST SOME OF THE EMBASSY ROOMS WITH INTERESTING BACKGROUND HISTORIES RELATED TO PAST CHURCH-STATE AFFAIRS. IN A SIGN OF THE TIMES, THE CARDINAL LEFT THE EMBASSY 90 MINUTES AFTER HE ARRIVED.

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS, RELIGIOUS LEADERS, CHURCH STATE RELATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 06-Jan-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BUDAPE00044
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770006-0966
Format: TEL
From: BUDAPEST
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1977/newtext/t19770176/aaaacopb.tel
Line Count: 104
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: b179b8dc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EUR
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 BUDAPEST 14
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 24-Jan-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3654720
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: CARDINAL LEKAI CALL ON CHARGE
TAGS: PINT, HU, US, (LEKAI, LASZLO)
To: STATE BELGRADE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/b179b8dc-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009